TRACKLESS REGIONS

BY

G. O. WARREN

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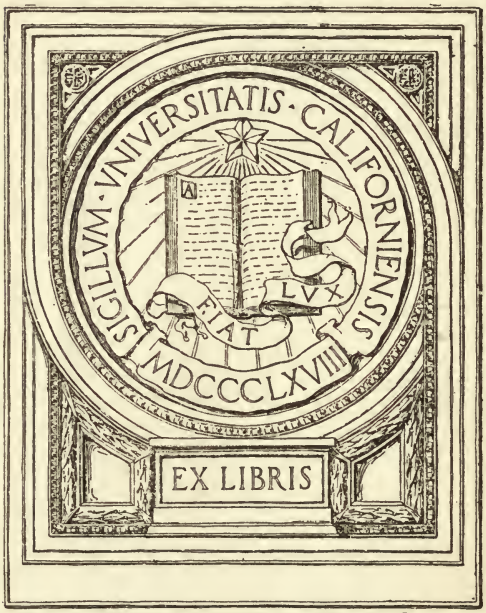

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TRACKLESS REGIONS

POEMS

BY

G. O. WARREN

"*I journeyed in desert places where was no inhabitant*
And in trackless regions I pitched my tent.
But there was given to me water out of the flinty rock,
And healing for my thirst out of the hard stone."

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"Thestorides, full many things there are that mortals cannot sound: but there is nothing more unfathomable than the heart of man."

"The harp was of three strings;
A string of iron, a string of noble bronze,
And a string of entire silver.
Goltarrgles was the other string
Which sends all men to crying . . . . "

POVERTY.

"In that hour when I am naught, then am I a man?'
"Yea, for now the gods lift thee."

ALL ye aflame with dark desire,
Who eat the bread of loneliness,
Know ye right well your house to keep,
To light which fire,
Which grain will bless?

Ye think I am a hapless wight,
Who see my rags, my broken shoon,
Ye know not how I sleep, how fare
At chill midnight,
At starving noon.

I break my fast in city streets,
When beggars drain my scanty bowl,
—And quench my thirst. That I shall want
Not they—is sweet
And brims my soul.

And this is how I rest; at last
My cloak bestowed, upon the ground
I lay me down, wrapped warm in him
Whose cold is past,
Whose covering found.

Beside the ashes of desire
Ye drank the cup of bitterness,—
Knew ye right well your house to keep?
To light which fire,
Which grapes to press?

SHADOW.

ALL that I am I give. And yet the self I was
Before you came, is gone.
You never knew that self which looked into a grave;
How could you know my night who are my dawn?

This human light is sweet. Yet my love-dazzled eyes
Turn back to grief again,
Craving the presence of that soul-enfolding shade
Woven of lonely question, human pain.

Love, were you but grief-wise! Could you but follow me
To wander in that night
Which though I fear to tread, yet whose mysterious dusk
Beckons me, woos me from unshadowed light.

But I must go alone. Though yearning still to see
Your radiant heavens burn,
Alone I enter darkness. O my Love! grieve not
If still my face be veiled when I return.

THERE WAS A WORLD . . .

"And the man cried out saying:
'Lo, thus hath this woman done unto me.'"

THERE was a world I planted for my Love
Budding with dreams, and trellised to the sky.
My heart soared with its branches, touched the stars,
But my Love mocked and passed it by.

Why did I hear the words she spoke to me,
Or take the blade she put into my hands!
Thin as a turning wave, and grey and cold—
Like storm-pale water on dark sands.

I hewed my world down to its quivering root,
While round me fell the wind-blown, starry leaves;
I made my autumn, made a ruined wood,
Wild as when self itself bereaves.

Yet bitterest of all, she praisèd me
And on my broken dreams she laid her head
Caressing . . . from their dying root upsprang
The blossom that she craved, . . . dark . . . red . . .

NEAR AND FAR.

A WOMAN sits beside my fire,
By my hearthstone,
Yet I am bitterly alone
With my desire.

Between us drifts a purple sea,
Unfathomed night,
With myriad worlds in flight,
Wild argosy.

Between us whisper shrouded Fates
The yea and nay
Of what hath been alway,
What Life to life relates.

Between us sweeps the old crusade—
Jerusalem . . .
She will not go with them
Where Thou art laid.

She sits and smiles beside my fire,
By my hearthstone,
And I am bitterly alone
With my desire.

THE CELL.

STRANGE is it not, that she and I should go
Down such divided ways;
Our shared, yet distant days
Rising to noon, fading to evening-glow,

To fall at last in still remoter night?
Her folded hands, her feet,
Her intimate heart-beat
In sleep lie close to mine; and yet the slight

Thin veil of flesh has hardened into stone—
A wall for hermit's rest.
She sleeps against my breast,
While I dream, like the anchorite, alone.

THERE IS A PATH.

Love said: "Lay down your burden and come forth with me."
But the woman answered "nay."
And a dream whispered: "I am the beginning and the end,"
But again she answered "nay."

THERE is a path within a wood
Where grow the trees of wild desire,
Whose blossoms are a spreading flame,
Whose fruit the very heart of fire.

Within that wood by day and night
A woman walks; and to and fro
She moves on her appointed way
As faithful silent pilgrims go.

She hears the murmur of the leaves,
And presses closer to her breast
The life she shelters;—on the wind
The branches sway in mad unrest,

And toss red flowers at her feet,
To drive their fires to her heart.
Yet hungrily she strains her arms
About the life she holds apart.

No leaping flame her spirit sears;
  Sweeter than whispering of the trees
There is a melody she knows,
  And quiet that her soul decrees.

Never was life so safe as his
  That found such shelter from the fire,
—Her breast—who, praying, treads the wood
  Where grow the trees of wild desire.

GREAT DARKNESS.

"O Charidas, what is there beneath?"
"Great Darkness."

SHE knew how, far beneath the river,
Under the swiftness lies the dumb black earth,
Remote, indifferent to death or birth
Or memory, or blessed gift or giver.

That Time the scent from bloom is reaving
She knew, and that no mortal hands can hold
The spring, whose journey's end lies dark and cold,
Unreached, unmoved by mortal hope or grieving.

How that deep night her day must sever
From mine, and how death's everlasting sleep
Perchance no dream of love or loss may keep
She knew,—and knowing, bound us one forever.

NIGHT AND SPRING.

I WHISPERED to the dying moon,
"I wait for love, O Love come soon!"
But dark with grief night gazed on me
All strange and silently.

I turned from night which answered not,
And said to spring, "Hast thou forgot
That sad earth decks her wintered breast
Only at love's behest?"

Above me in the windless sky
The aspen leaves hung tremblingly
Like those who know, yet still delay
The sorrow they might say.

Love came at last,—how long ago!—
And now lies dead. Alas, I know
Why spring, why grieving night were dumb
When I prayed love to come.

THE MESSENGER.

THERE stands a house among dead leaves
Vacant and still.
Under its grey bird-haunted eaves,
I cross the sill.

But not alone I enter there
Where my Love died;
Dark Grief and I together fare,
Together bide.

"Come faithful friend. I'll show to thee
The silent stair
Where she last turned and looked on me,
Thou, Grief, elsewhere.

"Then lay thy hands upon my head,
As she, of yore—
For thou wert sent me in her stead
Who heals no more."

THE REAPER.

DEATH glides swift-moving up an endless field
A ceaseless-swinging sickle in his hand,
Nearer and nearer yet to where I stand
With close embrace my trembling Love to shield.

O Death! one hour upon thy sickle lean,
When wild birds darken twilight with their wings,
And my Love lifts her head and sways and sings;—
How canst thou hear while thou dost reap and glean?

Ah, when the music of the living grain
With thrilling murmur sweeps across the hill,
Thou couldst not choose to be a Reaper still,
Nor ever bind those silent sheaves again.

THE STORM.

SHE reached for sunset fires,
And lived with stars and the sea,
The mountains for her temple,
The storm for priest had she.

Together a libation
They poured to the God she knew,
Such wine as ageless heavens
And lonely wisdom brew.

Now she has done with worship,
For her all rites are the same;
Yet storm keeps green forever
The moss upon her name.

TO A. C.
1878—1914.

OPEN before me lies a printed page,
Where words from your deep heart
Stand sentinels before a close-locked door,
Your dwelling place, apart.

They guard it still. Mysterious they stand,
Quiet as you who rest
Within the earth, whose night, already yours
Within your daylit breast,

Subdued your fires to their unearthly light.
But I shall glide within,
Past words, past circumstances, and past death;
Where other worlds begin,

Behind us all the bitterness of this,
Wherever you abide,
There I shall come—your lonely rebel shade
Forever walk beside.

SPRING AND RESURRECTION.

MUSING upon the miracle
Of wintered trees renewed in spring,
—When all they gathered patiently
From age and death to birth they bring—

I stand beside a lonely grave
Where, old and spent, beneath the snow
She rests, and cry into the night
For answers that no man may know.

Though night is dumb, yet still my heart
Holds visions of a life re-born,
Where all she learned from misery
Shall light her resurrection-morn.

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

WE moved together through the trees
And through long shadows, he and I,
Like gliding moon, or soundless breeze,
So hushed we trod, so peacefully.

But deep within the woods' dark night
We passed a house forlorn and still,
With windows dead for want of light,
And years of leaves upon the sill.

Then suddenly I knew for him,
There dwelt within a Memory
Which leaned and beckoned, sad and dim,
Companionless, despairingly.

Though silent past that lonely door
We went, as if unheedingly,
Yet my heart knew that now no more
We fared together, I and he.

THE WILD BIRD.

LIKE silence of a starlit sky,
Like wild birds rising in the night,
Such was her dying, such her flight
Into Eternity.

But I who dwell with memory,
Dream in my grief that she may soar
Too high, and needing love no more
Come nevermore to me.

WHERE THEY SLEEP.

THE fog inrolling, dark and still
Lies deep upon the crowded dead
As flooding sea upon the sands,
And quenches starlight overhead.

Long have they slept. Their separate dust
Has mingled with a nameless mould.
Only the slower-crumbling stones
Still tell so much as may be told.

And now in shoreless fog adrift
Like some lone mariner gliding by,
I lean above the drowning graves
And wonder when I too shall lie

Where evermore the tides of night
And earth will hide my lonely rest;
And Time will bid my love forget
To read the stone upon my breast.

THE CLOUD SHIP.

GREEN-deep below me lies the harboured sea,
A-wing with ships which sweep into the bay
Like homing birds; and here with memory
I dwell alone since my Love sailed away.

And oft we dream lone memory and I,
Of ships close-moored on death's dark waveless sea,
How far and vast those silent waters lie,
No north, no star, no voyage more to be.

But bound for some dim islands of the blest,
Swift-borne upon the wind-waves of the night
There comes a cloud-ship sailing towards the west,
With sunset wings wide-spreading in its flight.

Here in these mortal solitudes of earth
Now shall I dream of her, no more at rest
But broken from the anchorage of death,
And rushing, flying, on an endless quest.

THE PAST.

Memory, brave and warm and young
Glides in behind his lonely door,
Lies down with him, awakes with him,
Companions him for evermore.

I MET an agèd man low bent
At twilight o'er an ageless field,
And watched him with his trembling hands
Urge the spring earth new life to yield.

No one was near; far distant kine
Wandered amid the lean young trees.
Silent he toiled like those who know
The yea and nay of Life's decrees.

I thought how pitiful,—so old
Alone and needy; Life grown dim
As landscapes when the mists drift down,
—So must Life's fading seem to him.

And then I spoke. Some look of mine
Or some unlocking word I said
Were magical, for he and I
All suddenly were with the dead,

As sudden once again alive,
  And my blind sight saw with his eyes.
I gazed with him down years long gone
  As one who Time and Death denies.

I saw the green where crowding shades
  Were dancing by the silver moon,
And two apart, whose whispered words
  Distilled the sweetness lost so soon.

And then we looked down green-boughed lanes,
  Down one—mysterious spring-time place—
Where from a door set wide for love
  There leaned a dreaming spring-time face.

Then silence fell. The distant kine,
  Far, farther yet were lost to sight
As thoughts are lost on hills of sleep,
  And day received the veil of night.

THE SCOFFER.

FOR you earth lifts, how easily,
The giant trees upon her breast!
And streams, for you, how heedlessly
Are flowing to their final rest.

For you the stars move thoughtlessly,
You question not the set of sun;
Night tells you not mysteriously,
What course those distant worlds have run.

And once I saw you, carelessly
Standing beside an open grave,
Nor turned your strange soul brokenly
From Life which takes, to Life which gave.

Yet I shall bide here patiently.
It may be you will mock no more
When helplessly, when terribly,
A heart lies starving at your door.

ABYSS.

THIS was her will, her fashioning,
Over grief's uttermost abyss
To fling some bravely hiding bloom,
Upspringing rose of steadfastness.

We never dreamed warm summer's veil
Could lie so close to bitter snow,
Or winter keep the voice of spring,
But now alas! we know, we know.

For death has stripped the generous boughs
She grew to make the world more fair,
And in her garden, leafless, bleak,
The suffering lies gaunt and bare.

CONFESSION.

FORGET I am a woman, and your wife.
Forget my heart. I will blot out the hours
When your voice was my world, when down the years
We leaned and touched, and bridged our separate past.
I am not what I was. What I shall be
I know no more than does the twilight pool
When dying leaves drift down to veil the stars.
My soul lies like those waters; quiet, clear,
All that I am, yearning to shield, to hide
What you will tell me. 'Faithless', 'cold', shall fall
Beyond my sight and yours. No ripple mars
My listening spirit's tender stillness. Speak!

. . . . . .

Now all is told. From out my storm-swept deep
Something I knew not dwelt there rises wild,—
A mist—a wraith—and flies into the night.

. . . . . .

Did you turn after, did you give a cry?
Make haste, pursue it, bring me back my Self,
Capture that fleeting spirit ere too far
It vanishes within the trackless dark.

. . . . . .

O laggard feet, and slow sin-blinded eyes!
A lingering silence falls. The winds die down
On mournful waters, on a mournful shore
Dumb and untenanted for evermore.

TWILIGHT.

THE hours drift by, morning and noon and night
In weary flight.
They are not mine.
My hour is twilight; o'er the evening grass
Mysteriously it beckons, and I go
Across dim fields and down the wooded lane
To keep our tryst again.

We whisper, whisper, 'neath the sighing trees.
The listening breeze
Disturbs us not,
But hearkens like a wraith within the shade.
Twilight and I!—up to the darkening hill
We wander, with the softly treading wind,
Long vanished years to find.

Her House is wrapped in stillness like a shroud.
We stand grief-bowed,
We three that mourn.
Once, once, love met us here,—by paths rose-wound
Led us to dream by shadow-haunted pool.
Now trembling breeze knocks, knocks upon her door,
—Silence for evermore.

MYRTLE AND YEW.

THE wind in the churchyard sighing
The solemn quiet braves,
And now the trees are murmuring
Over the voiceless graves.

Their quickened boughs are bending,
They murmur "Yea" and "Nay",
Dark yew and myrtle whispering
Above long speechless clay.

The leaves of grief and laughter,
Of bridal and of death,
O what may they be saying
Upon the wind's faint breath?

"The bride smiled when they plucked me
To lay me on her hair"—
"And he wept when they gathered
My leaves for her sad bier."

"I heard him say '*Forever*',
And how she answered '*Yea*,'"—
"I saw him sleep beside her
When in the ground she lay."

" Where is Love now, bright myrtle ? "
" Nay where O ghostly yew ? "
" Alas, Death keeps it's secret
Alike from me and you."

The wind in the churchyard ceases.
The trees of Love and Death
Once more grown dumb, stand guarding
The dwellers in the earth.

THE EXILE.

MY heart from joy was sent
To endless banishment.
And now upon an alien shore
Unceasing tides chant "*nevermore.*"

Never a sail I see
Nor messenger for me;—
I drain the exile's bitter wine
To Her in loneliness like mine.

A MARRIED WOMAN.

For her soul dwells apart, and communes with "Virtue, where it inhabits the holy place of gods, and meets not the eyes of mortals visibly."

EVENING—And I sat knitting by the lamp,
The others gone to wander on the road
For it was warm indoors . . . They wanted air,
And I had been too silent. You leaned close
Touching the wool that lay upon my knees,
And looked at me, looked deep into my eyes;
So deep, so far, that you surprised my soul
Before it turned away. I feared you saw . . .
That all my world of dreams for you lay bare,
Each path, each thorn; a shadowy lover's wood
With trembling trees, mysterious singing leaves . . .
But some swift veil dropped down, I know not how.
Before you saw my stripped, unguarded heart
I had flung on a robe of winter-grey,
A habit such as nuns wear, wrapped it close
And turned me towards the dark. Beneath the lamp,
Still knitting, I sat dumb. Upon my eyes

I sudden felt a Hand, as when on fields,
Aflame with day, austerely night comes down,
Solemn and cool and grave. My sheltered gaze
Gave time for that grey soul of mine to hide.

. . . . . .

We did not speak. My silence held your thought
As if a living body in a grave
Lay starkly cold and still. When your heart stirred
I pressed it down as with a frozen sod.
A clock somewhere ticked out its measured time
While you and I, desire and dreams and death
Swung round beneath the stars. Perhaps you heard
My soul's wild crying, though 'twas not to you,
And how I prayed. I know you must have heard,
For when at last I folded up my work,
And stood, and said good-night, from out the grave
I made for you, you rose—as shall the dead—
With all the light of two worlds in your face,
And set me free, and gave me back to God.

MEMORY AND AUTUMN.

"That which forgetfulness shall never lay to sleep."

THE autumn wind from off the hill
Lays ghostly hand upon my door,
And lifts the latch to call me forth
In search of her once more, once more.

Would I might rest from wandering,
Or find some other path to tread
Than hers, some unfamiliar sky,
Some empty wood untenanted.

But I must walk remembered ways
Thick-shadowed by still-echoing leaves,
And lean against a darkened pane
Under forever haunted eaves.

Must gaze where once beneath the moon,
Her face was graven tremblingly
Upon deep waters' dreaming night ;—
Her look that nevermore shall be—
So pitiless is memory.

THE WREATH.

THIS was her room. Upon the dusty shelves
Her books. My faltering hands the pages turn,
And find her in a faintly pencilled word,
A phrase her eager spirit set apart
To guide her down the winding paths of thought
All starred with dreams, abloom with high desires.
That was her garden. Clinging rose of faith,
And sorrow's bitter-sweet, the herb of tears
And laughter, roots of patience striking deep
Like groping fingers in the soil of Time.
Now I have come to make a mourning wreath
From all of these . . . Against her window, dim
With absence, autumn-sighing boughs lean down
And stroke the panes as fingers touch a face . . .
Ah me! . . . . . .
Then suddenly the shadowed room
Is filled with spring, as if the shimmering May
Flung fragrant veils on winter and on Death.
Grey walls are vistas, long and still and sweet,

Whose twilight green shall never turn to day . . .
And she is coming, treading on the dew,
Her hands are weaving love and song of birds
And day and evening, stars and throbbing sky
And Beauty. All the darkness of the world
Resplendent in that magic web of hers.
The vision fades and falls . . . I bow my head,
And wind my garland while the night comes down,
With rose of faith, and sorrow's bitter-sweet,
With roots of patience, and the herb of tears.

THE MOURNERS.

ACROSS her lonely grave the wild birds fly
On drooping wing, the winds with sadder cry
As if to mourn her rest.

For never bird did soar so swift, so high
As she, nor wind outvie her melody,
Yet God, He knoweth best.

THE WANDERER.

"He will not return to me
But I shall go to him."

DRAW not his shade within the room.
No more
Wish thou for him love's sheltered rest
Such as he once deemed best;
But hushed, without thy midnight door

One moment share the wanderer's bliss
With him.
Upon thy timorous, fireside feet
Binding the sandals that are meet
To tread his pathways, vast and dim.

Then, though thy frail mortality
Astray
With one immortal, reckless,—roam
Too far, and fainting yearn for home,
For human, unmysterious day,

Yet strangely shall thy narrow walls
Retain
An echo of immensity.
Thy shell, a-murmur with the sea
Shall urge thee, drive thee forth again.

SCULPTOR OF MEN.

"Behold He taketh away . . . who can hinder Him? . . .
He sealeth up the stars. . . ."

SCULPTOR of men, who from Thy throbbing clay
Hast wrought the mould of lovers, art Thou then
Musing on some surpassing-high design
That all yet fashioned Thou must thrust away?

Hast Thou no yearning wish to lift once more
From out Thy ruthless dust, a face long veiled
In death,—lay thrilling fingers on dark eyes
Which once looked into Thine? Hast Thou so failed

In Thy great art, that not one dream of Thine
Hath taken form to move a mortal's heart
As Thou wouldst have it moved? Ah, I could tell
Thee where one lies—in twilight shade, apart,

Sheltered by murmuring boughs, green mosses drawn
From brow to feet, soft-folded for her pall;
Where music of swift waters lulls her sleep,
And for her dirge the wild birds' lonely call.

O Thou unwitting! who didst blindly fling
A magic soul to silence and the dark,
Where was Thy vision? Yea, Thou art like one
Who gave the flight—and yet hath broke the wing.

THE TAPESTRY.

GREAT Toiler, hidden in the night
Unresting at Thy ceaseless loom,
Winding the worlds, unmaking Tyre,
Unravelling Egypt; in their room

Spreading the fabric of To-day;
I wonder, plying Thy vast trade,
If Thou wilt choose Time's strongest thread,
Awhile to treasure what was made

Once—once—a love-in-death design—
Yea, if that pattern seem to Thee
Unmeet to be obliterate
Wilt weave it of Eternity?

SPRING AND WINTER.

NAUGHT is like spring,
When the first travail of the drowsy earth
Stirs the warm pools, and brings green leaves to birth;
Child-leaves that ever prattle to the trees
Of how the breezes played. No storm know these,
No weary age nor death; yea spring is best.

But winter comes,
And with the ancient healing of her ways
The broken leaves in quiet graves she lays,
And o'er the earth a spotless, solemn shroud
Spreads wide. Then she waits patient, with head bowed,
Sure they will rise again. Nay, that is best.

AUTUMN REMEMBERS.

A WILD bird singing upon a bough . . .
And now, and now
Reviving earth lifts up her head.
Long, long above her wintered dead
Hath she knelt mourning—and her face
Remembers for a space.

But dancing in summer's tattered green
All that hath been
She flings away, her grieving star
Is set; and yesteryear, afar,
From some dark marge of tears in vain
Calls her to mourn again.

Now autumn winds chant over the sea
What is to be,
And with sad fingers weave a shroud.
To that eternal dirge, head bowed,
Earth listens. Yea, not yet, not yet,
Shall her deep heart forget.

THE SEA GULL.

HIGH on an upland field
I found a grey gull's feather,
Pale blade with which some wing
Clove wild and stormy weather,

Cut through the woven air,
Severed the rain and the wind,
Parted the blinding cloud
A homing path to find.

O brave and eager heart,
To measure your strength with space,
To dare immensity
For love and a resting place!

THE EAGLE.

HIGH on a crag a wounded eagle stands,
And as the dying mariner craves the sea,
So o'er his sea—the sky—now gazeth he.
Looking with dim wild eyes across the world,
The grandeur of his blood-stained pinions furled
By death, he dreams of unforgotten lands.

And once I knew a wounded soul.
By grief withdrawn from lesser ways of men,
On spirit-heights he lived, beyond their ken;
Silent and far-communing, ever he
Turned steadfast eyes upon Immensity,
And faced the one imperishable goal.

SPRING.

THE earth is dreaming. Under drowsy snow
She stirs and whispers in her chilly sleep,
Murmuring faint snatches of an ancient air,
Mysterious song that memoried rivers keep.

She dreams of summer, with its snow of bloom,
Like life, like death, drop, dropping on her breast—
Dreams how the Pattern spreads, and then unwinds,
Spinning, undoing, then a winter's rest. . . . .

But that old music, thrilling in the Loom,
A magic veil on her cold limbs shall fling;
She knows and wakes; swift-fingered in the dark
She gropes to find the threads that weave the Spring.

THE TIDE.

THE slow tide hears the wind crying from off the shore;—
Like mother to her child
Turns, with a crooning song,
Lullaby sweet and wild.

Over the lonesome sand the ocean draws a fold
Of silver, starry, wide,
Embroidered with the moon,
The mantle of the tide.

THE TWILIGHT BIRD.

FRAIL, magic loom of sound, whose slender frame
Hangs high, invisible, in evening tree;
Flinging a silver thread from shade to shade,
Dipping in traceries of thrilling song
To weave the trembling patterns of a dream,
Falling and rising, your mysterious spell
Lifts up my grief; delivers it from pain
And soars with it beyond the shining moon.
Sorrow and music rise into the sky—
Music and tears within the heart of night!

AUTUMN.

ACROSS hushed evening fields, there drifts a breath
Of Life; faint resurrection of the dying earth.

Up the dark valley, riding on the wind
Swift travels wintry Death—grim, pitiless and blind.

FLIGHT.

COME now, lone moon! upon the marge
Of night, I wait for thy pale prow
To glide past promontoried cloud:—
O take me, mariner, within thy barge,

Slowly to wind through channelled sky,
Where hidden islands drop their bloom
Of stars upon the shadowy flood,
Wreathing our soundless wake as we drift by.

Then bear me, onward, unafraid, where wide
And darker yet, night-waters roll
Above the deep-drowned world: on, on,
Outborne upon a nameless, last, tremendous tide.

THE LILY OF THE NIGHT.

NOT brighter o'er the fields of Babylon,
Nor purer on mysterious Eastern hills,
Blossomed the midnight lily of the sky
Than now she burns, and pales, and thrills.

Deep-rooted in that firmamental sea
Whose purple tide, full-flood for evermore
Upbears her gleaming chalice, once again
The fadeless moon blooms by our fading shore.

THE MOON.

SLOWLY the frail moon climbs the hill of night,
Bowed, white-haired pilgrim of the trackless sky,
Whose fiery youth is quenched, whose heart's desire
Is like some wedding garment long laid by.

Around her dance the stars. Blind with their glow
They mark not how she passes bent and old,
How piteous that pale breast where ashes lie,
How tragic eyes once flame, and now grown cold.

But drop by drop of their essential fire
They too shall pay to Time, who silent stands
Receiving toll by Nevermore's dark gate;—
Hours, days, and years, and æons in his hands.

THE FLOWER OF THE MOON.

I LOOKED within the garden of the sky
Where leafy clouds o'erbranch the chaliced moon,
That pallid flower which fades and falls too soon;
I looked and mourned her sad fragility.

But far beyond her, past mortality,
Deep in the cloudy trellises of night
I saw the clustering stars, unchanging light,
Like buds which never bloom and never die.

THE GHOST STAR.

THE moon her slow dead veil is sweeping
Over the restless earth,
Over dark pain and death, over the throes of birth,
Binding in icy fold
Lovers and mourners alike, the young, the old,
Grief-vigilant, love-sleeping.

Once, once with Life she too went questing,
That frozen breast, once green,
Bears the print of vanished feet, and of what hath been
In long-past fantasy.
But lovers and mourners alike no more to be,
On a heart out-worn lie resting.

TILLERS OF NIGHT.

TILLERS of Night!
Ploughing the ancient sky, in fertile shade
Sowing mysterious seed, on what great field
Of darkness grow the silver grapes that yield
The rapturous wine of moonlight? Where was made
That magic fire? In what far vineyard pressed?
We know not when the firmamental spring
Returns, or if the night, like earth, must sleep
In wintry death; or if ye plant and reap
Immenser Time than ours, or fling
In one sufficing gesture, endless grain.
Howe'er it be, when your vast seasons turn
Forget ye not to drive the hidden share
Across the fallow spaces of the air;
Stint not the throbbing seed, that there may burn
Once more the radiant bowl of midnight wine.

MYSTERIOUS HARBOUR.

THE fires are cold,
The children sleep. Without my door I stand
Alone, and look at my strange, shuttered house
Where all the day I hungered for the night.
Then as a sailor turns him from the land

I face the Dark...
Thou knowest me, O Pilot of the sky,
Thy mariner. My eager sails are set,
Call thou thy swiftest winds, unveil the stars
That mark the compass of Immensity.

Uncharted North!
Curving beyond the firmamental sea—
Mysterious Harbour whence immortal dreams
Are launched to find a pathway to the world,
Send me a sign that I may moor in thee.

My heart's bell strikes...
I lean above the trackless, fleeting sky.
O Pilot listen! does a deathless Voice
Answer? or is it echo of my heart
Returning like a lonely, mateless cry?

. . . . . .

The vision fades...
I turn me home. Though tossed upon my shore,
Yet as the stranded shell sings of the sea,
So I of those vast tides. I hold, I hide
The thunders of that silence evermore.

THE CONQUERED CITY.

O where beneath the shrouded moon
Are all the dwellers of the town?
For now from broken roof and wall,
Grey Horror's face is leaning down

And gazing at the silent street,
While up and down the empty stair
With furtive tread and stealthy hands,
There starts and glides the thief Despair.

His arms are hung with Love and Peace,
Now torn in shreds that drip with red,
And hugged against his frozen breast
Are Dreams, plucked from the helpless dead.

Through halls dark-tapestried with death,
He whispers "Faith! come play with me.
Against your prayers and fire and flame
I pit my spoils triumphantly.

"Naught you desired, naught you made
Shall keep you from a beggar's plight,
With all your saints, your martyred Christ
You shall not win from me to-night!"

For destinies of Heaven and Hell—
O God!—Despair and Faith at play
Now bend across the heavy board
Where piled beneath the moon's dull ray

There lie the living and the dead,
What once hath been and what shall be.
And there they sit and cast the dice
To win or lose eternally.

WAR SONG OF THE WOMEN.

DEATH! thou who takest double toll
Of living hearts and dying men,
(O graves in which our hearts went down
Never in joy to rise again),

Hark to the song we sing to thee—
Grey women who are left behind,
Bereft of all we treasured most;
Destroyer pitiless and blind!

You hushed my lover's voice for me,
And froze the breast whereon my head
Once found warm shelter from the world.
You laid my heart beside the dead.

And did you think your task was done?
That lover's speech for evermore
Was silenced, that our stricken souls
Were dumb beneath the load they bore?

Dark Death! and if thy reddened hands
Outstretched for more, and more again,
Should take our uttermost and best,
Grim Slayer, yet they are not slain.

For we, grey mourners who are left,
Now serve and love and strive and yearn
As never women did before,
And from their dust such ardours burn

As never flamed within this world.
Yea, we whose joy died with our dead,
We, stern-baptised in bitter seas,
Beyond the shores of anguish led

By thy dread hand, our eyes have seen
A vision only grief-purged sight
Can look upon. We thank thee, Death,
For deathless love and quenchless light!

THE WAR WIDOW.

"She forbade not their departure, for she had thoughts worthy of a bride of Zeus."

I SENT my Love to serve a deeper heart
Than mine; from me henceforth to dwell apart
Taking the stricken world to be his bride.
He might not have another Love beside.

Across my solitary midnight sky
Horror, a-flame, went soaring, rushing by.
But wilder, higher yet than mortal fires
I heard the prayer, the cry of brave desires.

Now in my dreams I see a starlit plain
Whence he I loved and lost comes not again,
But in his Bride's dark mantle lies at rest,
His soul a burning jewel on her breast.

THE SECOND CALVARY.

THE lonely Figure on the solemn height,
His grave eyes darkened with an ancient pain,
Across the ages' shrouding veil of years
Now gazes once again.

For far below Him gliding soundlessly,
There moves a waveless ghastly sea of red,
And ruined hills give forth a horror-cry.
His sorrowing stricken head

Hangs lower, fainter still upon His breast.
He whispers, "Lord, not vinegar and gall
They offer now, but from War's vineyard pressed
The bitterest Cup of all.

"Yet Father, not my will but Thine be done."
But as He, shuddering, tastes the blood-bright wine
There comes a far-off answer through the night:
"*This is Man's will—not Mine.*"

OUT OF THE DUST.

SO bitter think you was their morning death—
Life, love, high faith but just begun,
Bitter to lay these down, and enter in
To darkened ways before their noon was run?

Sweeter perchance, they find tremendous night
Than this our empty narrow day,—
Music of anguish grander to the heart
Than village tune to pipe a soul away.

Brave Clarion! wild reed within the dark,
Over the muffled drums of pain
Rising triumphant to the listening stars,—
O fire our coward hearts to live again!

SPRING.

THE night is filled with spring, with fragrant airs
That bow the eager grasses to their earth
Witness of life and death. They rise, they bend,
Do homage to the sod that gave them birth,

And then draw blade to prick the evening sky.
Down by the marsh wild twilight-voices call
To pierce the dark that shrouds them, mate finds mate
By each faint ray of music, each love-cry.

Yet soon they sleep; too soon shall autumn's cold
Quench their brief song, and all the frozen wood
Be silent, all too soon the leaping grass
Must sheathe its green within the blackened mould.

O Love, the hidden sea that yearly lifts
This throbbing wave of spring, on its wide breast
Upbears thy heart, and mine,—its moving tide
Slow swings us, too, towards winter's lonely rest.

WINTER.

A WORLD benumbed. The wild, melodious rill
Has lost its cadence. From the stricken trees
No leafy music more, all black and bare
They spread mute branches in the cruel breeze.

Close-fettered in the viewless ice of death
More silent still and cold, the soldiers sleep,
All quiet now; no warmth, no voice, no love,
Where field and stream and heart their secret keep.

Yet I have seen the miracle of spring,
Heard wakened voices, prisoned woods set free,
—Mysterious still twixt veils of silence rent—
And paradise that was, again may be.

Thou shalt return, wild music of the hills!
And thou so dumb this many a wintered year,
Shall speak again, and take me by the hand
To lead me forth beyond dark death, and fear

To some eternal meadow in the sun,
Where all the magic of the world shall sing.
Then we shall rest and pray; shall understand...
Yea, I await that miracle of spring.

THE WILD HUNTSMEN.

THROUGH wooded copse and upland glade
The wild hares run, the wild birds fly.
Dark thickets gleam with curious eyes
To watch the armies thunder by.

Whence are these hunters? What the game?
No dogs are loosed to scent this prey,
Quick woodland ears are shuddering
To hear the cries of Men at bay.

For they who once slew woodland kin
Are fighting on a scarlet plain,
No more the dwellers of the wood
Are hunted—only men lie slain.

Aghast they watch the huntsmen come,
The steeds, the guns with flaming breath,
From east and west like gathering seas
To meet and break in waves of death,

While mid the thunder and the dust,
The frenzied hoofs, the mortal cry,
As if they fixed their Quarry still
The dead men stare into the sky.

And now upon the poisoned wind
Spectral, and grim, exultingly,
The timid hares, the trembling bird
See red-eyed Hate swift-rushing by.

DESPAIR.

WE dreamed beside the warm hearthstone
My Love and I. And in the flame
We saw a world without an end,
We read the book that has no name.

But up the silent garden path
And through the trees (so still before)
With storm and wild winds following,
War laid red fingers on our door.

He struck the door and shook the latch :
"From hearth and home come out to me,
And she shall have another Love
Her faithful mate to be."

Love left me by an ebbing flame.
And many a night in dark and cold
I sit beside the grey hearthstone
And think what never may be told.

Lo! stealthy like the gliding dusk
And quiet like the gathering night,
A presence stands beside my gate
And murmurs of true love's delight.

I listen. Round my trembling heart
Grief wraps a shroud of living death,
And fear lays icy hands on me
And ties my feet and stops my breath.

"*Red war that called thy Love from thee*
Hath sent me:—now come night, come day
Alone I will thy true Love be
Whom naught shall reave away."

O Christ! T'was Horror crossed the sill
And clasped me to his frozen breast.
He whispers by my black hearthstone
And will not let me rest.

He tells a tale, and o'er and o'er
He tells it me. Dead men that rot
Upon a field, with sightless eyes
That looked for home and found it not.

And when the dark winds moaning go
He tells me, "*So men dying, cry*
Into the night which answers not,
Into a blind and silent sky."

Though I would sleep as widows sleep
Yet Horror lies abed with me,
And hugs and whispers through the night,
And will not let me be.

"*Beneath the moonlight is his bed*
Who shall with thee lie nevermore,
And colder than the moon he lies
Who warmed thee on his heart before."

. . . . . .

Then Horror got me with a babe
And mocking, christened it Despair.
O now I lift it to my breast,
And hungrily I press it there

At peace beside my dead hearthstone;—
For now I know ere dawns the day
The child that Horror gave to me
Will surely drain my life away.

THE UNBURIED DEAD.

NO requiem is theirs, no shade
Of solemn dome, nor peaceful prayer
Taking its flight on wings of incensed air.
No sheltered grief mourns these, nor hath man made

The storm-hung bier whereon they sleep.
Yet not unwatched they lie ;
The steadfast moon, pale ghost-star of the sky,
Night's acolyte, doth heaven's Altar keep.

And choired winds a litany
Shall chant, antiphonal and low,
August refrains no mortal man may know,
Out-lasting love, and grief and memory.

BELGIUM.

CORN once spread promise on the hills
All gemmed with poppies' living glow,
And setting sun lit fires of peace,—
How long, O God! how long ago.

Now poppies in deserted fields
Are like red wounds in dying men.
To eyes tear-blind each setting sun
Lights flaming pyres of death again.

THE RIVER OF DEATH.

HOW crowded is thy brink, River of Death!
In solemn state, and one by one no more
The shades await thy ferryman, with slow
And quiet tread to go,
When his dark prow touches the living shore.

Now horror-hunted, blinded with red tears,
In shuddering herds they cry upon the shore;
"*O Boatman, swift return! Bear us away*
Where is nor dawn nor day
Only oblivious night for evermore!"

Unearthly tide! will peace return to thee,
And patient shades embark on thee once more,
Who loving life, yet since thou will'st it so,
Mutely obedient go?
Nay, wilder and more anguished teems thy shore!

THE VINEYARD.

1914—191—

THAT will be rare and precious wine
O God! when all the grapes of pain
Are pressed, when from the heart's red vine
The fruit is torn again—again—

When nevermore a quiet spring
Leads summer on the hills of peace,
And nevermore Thy Fingers cease
To reave our vineyards, or to fling

The dark and heavy-clustered grief
In that unfathomed Press of Thine.
Not light Thy revels, Lord, nor brief
Must Heaven's banquet be, when wine

Is from such solemn vineyards drawn,
Whose roots lie woven round the dead.
Yea, fill Thy Cup with anguish red
From morn till night, from night till morn

We question not, nor grudge. But yet
We ask one guerdon, Lord. At least
Forget us not. Do not forget
What fills the Chalice at Thy Feast.

DARKENED.

THE cottages are lone and cold.
For up and down the village street
The stricken women move and talk
In whispers, as if ghosts did meet.

"Three days ago it was," one said,
"The babe which leaps beneath my breast
Will never hear his father's voice
Nor know what earth took him to rest."

And one with head tear-bowed and grey
Wept as only the old can weep,
Whose fires once warm in ashes lie,
Whose child not love, but death, doth keep.

Now cottages are dark and still.
Behind each silent grief-barred door,
The women lie alone, and dream
Of those who shall return no more.

Above the night-black roofs, the moon
Swings a slow censer in the sky,
And moon-white clouds go drifting up
From Time, into Eternity.

THE ENDLESS ARMY.

And the fathers of the children go out to that Endless Army, and come not again.

WITH folded hands beside the fire
Silent she muses. Scarlet flames
Leap from the ashes, then like bloom
Of briefest hour, faint and fade,
While secret, darker, grows the room.

. . . . .

Dream-shielded from the changeful world
Upstairs the children lie asleep.
The gliding moonlight enters in,
Unearthly, reminiscent, still,
And touches sleeping brow and chin—

With magic art of light and shade
A strangeness carves upon their youth.
The moonbeams, lighter than a breath
Dream-stirred, have sculptured deep and pale
A less than life, a more than death.

Yet not alone the moonlight there,
For she who watched the ebbing fire
Leans breathlessly above the bed . . .
Her yearning eyes explore each face
To find once more her blessed dead.

The reverent moonlight lays a veil
On hair grown silver 'neath her ray
And waits . . . Outside, the moaning trees
Are hung like harps in branching night,
Swept by the fingers of the breeze.

The wind, the Moon, and Memory . . .
Slow tears, and grief, and Life and Death . . .
'Mid that great company, asleep
The children lie in marble peace,
Unknowing who the vigil keep.

And always down the quiet road
A soundless tramp of ghostly feet . . .
Remembered, half-dreamt battle cry . . .
While past the house, beneath the trees
Dim regiments of shades march by.

SISTERS.

To M. A. C.

1914—

THERE is a space between us, deep and wide,
The years when you were there, and I was here.
No words can bridge them, nor the touch of hands,
Nor straining breast to breast, nor prayer, nor tears,
Nor groping heart, nor yearning soul's desire.
Nay, each of us is twain; the comrade self
Which through our years of youth shared all the world,
—And now this Stranger. You and I were strange
Through four long years. I did not share your sleep,
Nor ever morning bloomed across the sky
For us together . . . While you dreamed I watched,
When I lay down to rest, your day began,
Your labouring climb up all the hills of grief.
I knew you walked there, for my lonely feet
Trod that same path, but never by your side.
I called, you answered, half the world between.

. . . . . .

O brave and blessed! now we are met at last.

Beneath the lamp, beside your quiet fire
We talk and laugh, and weep for what has been;
And wonder if God knows all that we gave
When for the hidden purpose of His world
He made us strangers for a bitter space . . .
Made our love dumb and blind. O let us dream
That far beyond this world, in some still place
Those years of ours shall meet, lay hour on hour
And pain on lonely pain . . . Then growing one,
An undivided living stream of Time,
Shall thrill within our minds, leap in our hearts,—
All mine be yours, all yours forever mine.

"SHE WILLED THAT HE SHOULD FORGET ALL ELSE."

"Si tibi opus est meo labore non recuso laborem."

"HE fell bravely fighting to the last."
She remembers the sudden phrase
Read by this quiet lamplight,
With the dying west ablaze.

Now forever her soul walks the fields
Where he sleeps, lifting each solemn head
To gaze,—then a reverent veil
Laying over another's dead.

Not there, not there. Ghostly miles
She treads, past the silent slain
Who answer not, will not tell
Where she may behold again

The face forever desired.
Midnight now—the lamp burns dim,
Midnight—yet once more, once more
She wanders in search of him,

Once more through the death-dumb fields.
Only for guide as she goes
This—he will lie turned from home
From her—this her sure heart knows.

THE CHALICE.

GREAT Priest I cannot see Thee as Thou art.
Though Thy deep voice across the solemn night
Chants the vast litany of life and death,
Yet is the altar hidden from my sight.

Hast Thou a quenchless taper in the dark?
Some loving acolyte to lift for Thee
A censered heart? or art Thou all alone,
Requiring naught from brief mortality?

I will not question more. Thy ritual
I may not know. Yet if to Thee seem good
To fill Thy cup, break sacrificial bread,
May they be mine, my body and my blood.

HUNGER.

THEY thought because I turned away
From feasting, and the rose-bright glass
That I, (more starved than all the rest,
With thirst afire in my breast)
Had lesser need than they, alas!

But never had there been for me,
Beside that board an empty place,
Whence I could see great waters lie
Draining the moonlight from the sky,
Or setting stars adrift in space.

Unfed I left their crowded room,
And silently, without the door
Received the night;—at last, at last
Infinity to break my fast,
A reveller for evermore.

THE ONE.

"THE circle of the Universe is One"
—And yet within Eternity's huge curve,
Broken in magic, shimmering whirls of Time,
Lie spring and autumn, song of evening bird,
Brief coils of Beauty flung into the Vast
The blazing splendour of the dying west,
Night's glittering hoard, stars slowly one by one
Withdrawn before the covetous eye of day;
The questing moon, with palely spreading sail
Exploring endless caverns of the dark;
Dream-weaving pines within a lonesome wood
Dipping their netted branches in the sky,
White blossoms on a pool,—a leaning bough
Thrilling with twilight melody . . . Ah me! . . .

. . . . . .

When I have left this changeful-seasoned earth
Let me once pause and turn. Let me look down
Where far below still glides a springtime moon.
Some wild breast's cadence, some remembered air,
Or fragrance from a dawn-discovered rose
Perchance may rise, may give me heart once more
To climb alone the changeless heights of God.

THE LIVING VOICE.

IN the dark I heard one playing
A viol, strange and wild,
Methought wise age was stirring
The strings; nay, 'twas a child.

We know not what we are saying,
Neither the young nor the old.
The mother in her grieving
Knows not what she hath told.

The rapturous lark up-soaring
Or brooding on her nest,
Is in her song out-pouring
What she hath never guessed.

And when o'er the moors are flying
The curlews, swift and high,
They reck not in their crying
How Life gives forth a cry.

So may Love beside the dying,
Hear in that ebbing breath
A living voice, denying
Loneliness and Death.

FIRESIDE.

I SIT with my old friend by the fire.
We heap the scarlet coals, and speak of days
Cherished and gone, . . . one fragrant spring we knew
When bloom lay thick as snow upon the fields.
And then we pause; late-autumn boughs lean down
And tap with musing fingers on the pane . . .
But I who talk and listen, where am I?
Searching the hollow valleys of the night,
The bonds of this tight-clinging flesh of mine
Half-loosened like a mantle, from my eyes

The body's hood thrown back, my half-freed soul
Yearning to fling its heavy cloak to Death,
And unencumbered plunge among the stars.
O voyage through the labyrinths of Space,
Borne like a thought down cataracts of Time
To worlds where Time is not—to some far shore
Beyond horizons charted in our dreams;
On, on, as if a barge should spread aloft
A fiery heart for sail,—a heart's desire,
Wild, urgent, like a cry within the wind.

Red embers fall. And now my friend and I
Draw closer yet beside the ebbing flame.
I hear his voice again, see lanes we knew
With hawthorn all adrift. But o'er my eyes
The folds descend; struggling, reluctant, I
Who stood just now mid pathways of the stars,
Am caught and bound in my mortality.
I listen, smile, and watch the dying fire
Rebellious, once more captive, in the dark.

A VISION OF A CITY.

I SAW in troubled sleep,
A dark-browed, fearful shape: about her face
Hung horror like a hood. There was no trace
Of love or pity in her tearless eyes,
Whose lids drooped low as clouds in stormy skies,
But shadowy babes groped vainly for her breast,
Wailing unfed, unsheltered, uncaressed.
And in my dream came drifting to her knees
Gaunt famished ghosts, like leaves from dying trees;
Faster they came, huddled to starve and die
By her, whose loveless, awful eyes were dry.

. . . . . .

Long years have passed, yet still that face I see,
Haunting my sleep; and still I cry to Thee
O God, teach her to weep!

WHEN I MUST DIE.

WHEN I must die, yea though t'were summer's height,
Yet all the world for me shall lie like snow
In some untrodden north, and I below
Great drifts of death, shall mark not day from night.
Life, must this be? Will never moon lie bright
On fields again, will flying seasons go
And come yet I sleep too benumbed to know?
Must I lose wings with beauty still in flight?

Not this my end. O miracle of spring!
Grope in the frozen sod to find my heart;
With netted roots lift up my heavy head;
Send me wild April dreams, around me fling
The bloom of May. Then teach me your great art
With Death, that Death may know I am not dead.

THE FOREST POOL.

WITHIN a trackless wood there lies a pool
Whose slumbering waters, motionless and deep,
Of stars and moon the solemn secret keep.

But o'er the pool there leans an agèd man,
Who on that mirror, traced by evening's breath,
Perchance the secret reads of Grief and Death.

FEAR OF DEATH.

NOW he has laid his dust aside
And folded up his clay.
Has flung apart vast doors of death
And left our narrow day.

But I who still wear cloak of flesh
The huddled robes of earth,
Aghast before his homelessness,
The starkness of his birth,

Draw closer yet my living shroud,
And pray God for the key
To lock the selfsame gates he passed
Who owns Infinity.

DEATH AND LIFE.

"Holding his hand before his face to screen his eyes as if some dread sight had been seen, and such as none might endure to behold. And then, after a short space, we saw him salute the earth and the home of the gods above, both at once, in one prayer."

WHAT voice shall sing of thee dim-veilèd Death
Whose shrouded eyes behold us—we not Thee?
Lone master of the high vineyarded hill,
On cloud-wrapped terrace slowly down and down
Pressing the grapes for sacramental wine
Not ours to drink, nor thine.

Grey wanderer up the tangled slope of age,
Stooping now here, now there, for thy dark wreath
To pluck some fragile solitary bloom
Whose love-reft petals met thee on the wind.
Dread gardener of the separate midnight hour
For bud not yet a flower

Who reachest—choosing with a cold strange hand
The dawning rose to wind with evening yew,
(Too soon, too soon for them that sowed fair seed),
Yet gatherest so slow the asphodel
For hands outstretched upon a tortured shore,
Yearning to wait no more!

Swift on the sea are thy undaunted feet
O Death. To choired thunders' wild lament
Thou droppest men like leaves within the deep;
Falling in soundless, dark, autumnal flight
On that unearthly forest-floor to lie,
While storm and thou sweep by.

Most bitter Death art thou, when lover's phrase
Thou'lt have unsaid; the word that love forgot
When leaping hope rode high within the breast
Not dreaming of a wound. Thou woundest now
O Darkness! with uplifted cypress bough
Ordaining silence . . . Now, on woe on weal
Inexorable Seal!

Tiller of souls! across Immensity
Who drivest thy deep blade, in riven hearts
Thou findest promise of full harvesting;
Yea, Husbandman of bare grief-ruined fields,
In thy dark furrow, sorrow's dying grain
For thee shall rise again.

Within that wilderness thou com'st to me
Great vision,—mid the after-world and this
O Mystery, I see thee as thou art.
Renunciation's solemn bays close-bound
Upon thy death-anointed, deathless brow
Life! I behold Thee now.

THE SOWER.

BENEATH the quiet sky
A sower casts his seed upon the hill,
Where sleeping seed will wake
Obedient to the spring's awakening will.

How strangely from Thy Hand
Across the darker fields of death and grief
Men's souls, like seed, are flung;
But will that harvest, Lord, like earth's be brief?

Or to deep-furrowed Death
Dost Thou consign only immortal grain?
—Lay down in lonely Grief
Enduring hearts that deathless rise again?

"THE EARTH SHALL SILENCE MUSIC—"

FULL soon, too soon, the silent earth shall hide
All music in her quiet; fold on fold
Shall muffle pain, reiterant and deep,
And love's wild flutes be dumb within the mould.

Perchance the muted choirs of the world
One day will rise,—earth's mortal stillness break
With paeans grander than the strains of Time,
And death will sleep—sleep—nevermore to wake.

LIFE.

LIFE, clad like a needy beggar,
Came knocking at my gate.
"Give me your lass and lad," he said,
"Before it be too late."

"Nay ragged man, pray tell me
Where shall their shelter be,
And who will tend them ill or well
If they go forth with thee?"

"No shelter and no tending
Shall they have, or well or ill,
With me is wildness on the sea
And hunger on the hill.

"My nights are bleak and lonely,
And sorrowful my day,—
All those who take the road with me
From ease must turn away."

And then I looked upon him,
On Life in beggar's guise,
O would that I might ever tell
What lay in his deep eyes.

I gave him youth and maiden,
With Life they left my door.
I am content though my heart knows
They will return no more.

THE RESURRECTION.

HE had one dream by night and day,
To saddle a horse and ride away
"To see Christ's tomb," he said.

At last with scrip and horse and sword
—To kith and kin with never a word—
He rode while dawn was red.

He rode athirst and starved, but found
The Holy Place on holy ground
And knelt with love and dread.

Full many a year he worshipped well,
And then to us as a dark night fell
Returned with whitened head.

We gave him meat, we filled his bowl,
But a look—the look of a sorrowing soul—
On his white face we read.

"I'll tell you of Christ's dying place,"
—And then all silent for a space,
Full sore he wept instead.

"O many a bitter tear I weep,
'Tis in my heart Christ's grave is deep,
Where I have sinned, He bled.

"Yet even in me, of all His least,
He promised—in the sacred East—
To rise again"—he said.

THE OLD PEASANT.

ALONE beside her spinning wheel
Her agèd fingers tireless draw
The thread, though on the blackened hearth
The ebbing fire glows no more,

And though the table with its fare
For one, has scarce enough to feed
The birds that peck upon the sill,
And there is none to know her need.

At dusk I stood within her door
And saw her rags, the chilly room,
And how she plied the ceaseless wheel
And whispered in the gathering gloom.

"O God," she said, "All this I spin
Is some fine altar cloth begun,
And garment for the priest to wear
When we receive Thy Blessèd Son."

'Twas thus she mumbled to herself
And lower bent, and shook her head
At every knot within the wool,
Or thinning in the sacred thread.

Her fingers moved as eagerly
As were she young, not poor and old,
And making her a bridal-dress,
Of cloth of silver, cloth of gold.

And now beneath a lonely sod
Long since she sleeps upon the hill;
—God grant, that in her homespun shroud
She dreams of blessèd vestments still.

THE GARDEN.

A MAN there was, of simple kind,
Who to the Lord gave all his mind.

For naught he cared, naught cravèd he,
Save his Lord's servant for to be,

And e'en his garden plot kept fair
Because, he said, the Lord walked there.

Of this his friends made many a jest
Yet he toiled on with heart at rest.

The years went by. His head grown gray,
Still he believed Christ passed that way.

Then came a time when he was left
Of loving wife and child bereft.

"He will doubt now," the scoffers said,
"When wife and child and love are dead."

But all their words he heeded not,
And tended still the garden plot.

At last himself lay at death's door,
To love, believe and work no more.

His pitying friends stood by his bed,
And this is what to them he said:

"O bury me not in a church-yard mound
But lay me in my garden ground;

"From loving dust it needs must be
That flowers will spring more fair to see,

"And Christ will know, in my last sleep,
For Him I still the garden keep."

THE ARTISAN.

I KNEW a man of humble mien—
Poor artisan, who to his cell
Carried the fragments of the world,
To mend them lovingly and well.

He took the burning shards of sin,
The tattered rags of old desire,
And statues torn from blessed shrines
Where once men kept an Altar fire.

I saw him lift a broken stone
Half wings, half horror,—ruined eyes . . .
And gaze as one looks on the dead,
Sublimely as who death denies.

And then he turned him to the west
Where sunset glowed beyond the trees,
And made obeisance, like to one
Who understands Life's deep decrees.

The sky grew dark. Yet I could see
Him drain the heart's blood from his breast
Pouring it on that shattered stone . . .
At last he laid him down to rest.

Then I beheld no mortal thing,
For now the statue, wings unfurled,
Blazed like an angel in the room
Filled with the secret of the world.

But in the shadow, on the ground,
There lay the body of a man;—
As embers lie where once was flame
So lay the humble artisan.

Then as I stood in heart of night,
All silently, all silently
The moon rose, spreading o'er his face
A shroud of white Eternity.

THE MOUNTAIN.

"And the chief things of the ancient mountains
And the precious things of the lasting hills."

DARK, solitary, still,
A mountain crag lifts silence into night.
The wind's capricious will
Concerns it not, nor season's restless flight.
Not spring nor winter, life nor death.

Yet in that changeless heart
Perchance some secret lies forever hid,
Mysterious, apart;
Some prophecy which coward worlds forbid,
And cover with a changeful earth.

DEEP WATERS.

"Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the heart of the seas. And I shall bring up the deep upon thee and the great waters shall cover thee."

GRIEF led me down upon a lonely strand
Whose silence hemmed a lonelier, darker sea.
Far, far behind me lay the dreaming land
Of what no more shall be.

And there I laid my will upon the shore
And my defenceless heart I gave to Thee,
Bereft of all that sheltered it before
From this Thy mystery.

O Life! if Thou canst hear me, where I cry
From Thy deep waters, Thy unfathomed sea,
Thou knowest now no wish, no questions, lie
Between Thy Will and me.

PEACE.

TURN, turn, wide sea of Peace
And flood the shore . . .
Drown thou all yesterdays, and hide
My soul for evermore.

Cleanse, lave me, sea of Peace,
And may no tide
Recall thee, may no winds disturb
The depth where I would bide.

Lull, heal me, sea of Peace;
My listening heart
Slow, slowly sinking down in thee,
Far from the world, apart,

The music of thy wave
Like some faint bell
Repeats:—then rests in thy deep bed
As lies the murmuring shell.

THE GRAIL.

"FEARLESS of peril, solitude and pain,
To seek Thy Grail I leave the ways of men.
Oh Uttermost and Perfect! Shining Star!
Lead Thou my feet there where Thy mysteries are."

'Twas thus I prayed, on this high errand bent
In pilgrim's garb forth from the city went,
While farther and more faint the voices grew,
Of love and friends and all the joys I knew.

Long are the roads that only pilgrims tread,
Those paths no shelter give, no well, no bread.
Lonely the nights, starved and athirst the days,
While the blest vision evermore delays.

Yet even as birds are by a wind upborne,
So driven by heart's desire, midnight and morn
Found me upon the mountains still, in lands
With hope alone for guide,—on eastern sands

Whose golden waters, soundless wave on wave,
Horizon's swift receding footsteps lave;
Where endless shores vestments of silence wear,
And the lone spirit craves no speech save prayer.

Yet all my offering of weary years,
Of youth and sheltering love, of bitter tears
And steadfast quest, found me unworthy still;
The Grail held from my sight, hid in His Will.

At last I turned me home. With cloak grief-rent,
Unworthy pilgrim, stricken, old, and spent,
Christ's sinful wanderer,—one evening late
As beggars pass, I passed the city gate.

Now darkness deepened; and the city's roar
Ebbed like a tide. The leprous, crowding poor,
Vanished in gloom, and like a sea-swept stone
Left high upon the shore, so I was left, alone.

Then in the silence, up the empty street
I saw a Shadow move; not slow, nor fleet,
But as a cloud drifts up the endless sky,
O Love, O Christ! that Shadow came to me,

And grave unfathomable eyes looked into mine
So long tear-blind. "Give Me that pilgrim cup of thine,"
He said; and stooping o'er the city street
Some dust He gathered, trod by sinners' feet;—

"O man! My Heart bleeds here."—And then a veil
Fell on my sight, but in my hands I held the Grail.

QUESTION.

O THOU that cravest shelter,
My bread and wine to share,
Wilt thou take, at My table,
Unquestioning—My fare?

When My feast lies before thee
And when no other guest
Shall share thy bread of solitude—
Will this to thee seem best?

And though from bitter vineyards
Is drawn My lonely wine,
Man, may I fill thy trembling cup
Full to the brim,—like Mine?

THE DEATHLESS VOICE.

I WANDERED through a solemn evening glade
Whose branches wove deep solitudes apart,
And swaying, murmured: "*Long delayed*
Hath been thy shriving, O rebellious heart."

Beneath the arches of leaf-cloistered shade
I knelt to hear the services of night,
When flaming sunset altars fade,
And tapered stars shed distant, graver light.

Immensity was with me as I prayed,
And now as if for sacrament, at dawn,
A song—unearthly, unafraid,—
Of nightingale with breast upon a thorn.

WILT THOU SUP WITH ME?

"Abscondit lucem in manibus."

"MAN, wilt thou sup with Me?"
"I thirst and hunger, Lord," I said,
"For living water, for the living bread,
And all my days for this
Have prayed—in bliss
To rest alone with Thee."

"Nay, wait; we shall be Three."
I looked, and lo! there Sorrow stood
With deathless eyes beneath her solemn hood—
"Yea blessèd Lord," I said,
And bowed my head,
"Thy will—so let it be."

THE HIDING PLACE.

O LORD! where is Thy hiding place?
Forever, night and day,
Through ageing years I wander down Life's way
To find Thy Face.

O Swift-Receding! shall I leave
All I possess for Thee?
Thou hast my youth; must love, too, no more be?
Wilt Thou bereave

Thy pilgrim of all else but Thee?
Now, standing by love's grave
I hear Thy answer Lord; all that I gave
So eagerly

Found wanting still, naught could suffice
But this. Yet I fulfil
All that Thou askest Lord,—I do Thy will,
I pay Thy price.

INTROIBO AD ALTARE DEI.

O GOD, art Thou Master of Life
Yet still hast hidden in Thy heart,
Apart,
The meaning of grief and strife?

Art Thou Master of our desires?
I cannot think Thou know'st men old
And cold,
When Thou withholdest Thy fires.

This I know;—Thou art Master of me,
For, beaten, alone, blind with pain,
Once again
I grope in the darkness for Thee.

SILENCE.

"If a woman . . . vow a vow unto the Lord . . . then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand."

LORD! Now that I behold Thee face to face
And death hath burned the body's mist away
I offer Thee a gift, which through long years
I treasured for Thee. Nay, it is not tears,

Nor sacrifice, nor bitter solitude,
Nor doubt, nor grief, nor rebel heart's desire;
None, none of these. It is a gem, a flame,
And writ upon it, in my blood, Thy Name.

Do Thou look well—it is a throbbing fire—
Or shall I tell Thee? It is only this,
My silence. Once, once from a lover's wood
A magic whisper called me, and I stood

Listening like those who, stifled 'neath the earth
Might feel the sod lift, yet should give no sign,
But press upon their lips a seal. Yea, I
Was silent then—I veiled my face—passed by.

Take it O Strange and Stern! this gem, this fire,
Unfolded from the covering of the years
Where it lay safe for Thee. And I will rest,
While Thou dost wear my silence on Thy Breast.

THE PRISON-HOUSE OF GRIEF.

A REBEL captive I, in sorrow pent,
And strove to find the door,
Beating my youth against unyielding pain
Whose echo came, and came again
"No more, O heart! no more."

Yet in my bitter, dark imprisonment,
Not even hope for light,
With trembling hands I ever sought the door
To all that I possessed, before
Grief locked me in its night.

But once, as groping through the gloom I went,
I found a cell unseen
Till then,—silent and bare, yet like a flame
And burning on the wall a Name:—
Here died the Nazarene.

Long years have passed, and I am bowed and spent
In grief's captivity.
And yet no tears can quench my taper dim,
Alight in memory of Him
Who would not be set free.

THE FIRE.

"Death was now the phoenix' nest."

I SAW a burning pyre upon a hill,
And heard a voice from out the leaping fire
Which cried "Give more, yet more! I must mount higher
To reach the secret ardours of His Will."

Of those who heard some heeded not, some came
And offered love, and some laid down their grief.
I saw how poor the gifts, their light how brief,
While ever rose that crying in the flame.

Up endless ways of fear and night I fled,
And laid my life upon the fiery hill
The ceaseless crying of that voice to still;—
Then silence fell, and heaven itself flamed red.

THE TEMPLE.

A TEMPLE fashioned I of hours and years,
Builded with grief, inwrought with tears,
And down its solitary aisles,
In solemn, hushed defiles,
My mourning heart arranged its dead.

Then on the altar, shadowy and still,
I laid all I possessed, my heart, my will,
My youth; and kneeling there alone
I said "My task is done,
And I own nothing, nothing more."

Then rose a Voice, like wind across the sea,
"*Nay, this thy shelter wilt thou leave for Me?*"
And there upon a naked sod
I knew the Homeless God,
My temple, dust upon His hills.

O TROPIC WILDERNESS OF STARS.

O TROPIC wilderness of stars,
Whose fiery grain no man shall reap;
Wide, flaming harvest of the night
Where evermore the Seasons sleep,

Nor stir for thrill of earthly spring,
Nor spread their wings of icy grey,
Nor throb with summer's burdened heat,
But drowse eternity away:—

O sea, by whose lone, silver shore
At last I learned a magic word,
Your secret whispered to the sky,
Music half-guessed, yet never heard:—

O Birth, when to the waiting world
There comes One More. When in the night
A soul embarking from afar
Steers in to find the harbour-light

That glows within some woman's breast . . .
Once, once my heart was cold to these,
From Life to Death I turned away,
With Death I drained his bitter lees,

Refusing Faith's immortal wine.
Now I have found my soul's desire;
It burns my mountains from their gloom
And sets my frozen vales on fire.

REBORN. 1914—191—.

"Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai to see the fire and the cloud, and the darkness—"

LIFE! we have leaned on Thee in all our days—
Have asked for love, for peace.
Impatient for release
From pain, have prayed for sheltering in all our ways.

Now stricken eyes behold Thee anguish-rent
With sorrow past our ken
Who are but mortal men.
Thy darkened hour hath come. Immensity hath sent

To Thee, more than thy creature, bitter grief,
Whose fathomless grim sea
Is known only to Thee;—
Such we know not, whose mortal hour is brief.

Yet in our passing day, we who before
Too careless were of Thee,
Now burn for Calvary,
For pilgrimage on hills of sacrifice for evermore.

DUST.

STRANGE, tremulous frame of Man! the heart's faint clay
So soon to crumble in the dreamless fields,
Dust with their dust, dead ashes of desire,
No spark, no gleaming embers left where once was fire.

I wonder—marvel that so brave a cup
Is hollowed from the sod, such passionate wine
Should spring from earth for His stern sacrament;
That dust should sin, and weep, and sorrow, and repent,

Should strain swift-blinding eyes to look on Him;
Dust yearn and labour, thrilling all its days
For one touch of His Hand:—yet, when He wills
Be lost within the winds, adrift upon the hills!

SACRIFICE.

HOW long, O God, wilt Thou Thy secret keep
From us, who groping up the cruel steep
Of darkened bitter years,
Still cry to Thee for light before we sleep?

Is it a war Thou wagest with some foe
Beyond the power of mortal mind to know,
And in Thy lonelier night
Art Thou too, toiling, as we toil below?

I dream that in Thy hidden battle-world
Hang solemn bannered gleams of Hope unfurled—
And, slaying Death and Sin,
Men's souls, like quivering piteous spears are hurled.

If dreams be true, then may Thy Will be done
In me, who of that endless army one
Now give one life the more;
Use it, O Lord, before my course be run.

Take up my loving will, yea, lift this blade
Of trembling steel which in Thy forge was made,
Fling it on Sin and Death:—
Though broken, lost, I shall not be afraid.

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